

Dog Days

Newport Forest Saturday August 15 2009 2:40 - 7:20 pm

weather: prc. 8mm; RH 60%; BP 99.8 kPa; calm; haze/sun; T 34° C
purpose: property check (i.e. half-day vacation)
participants: Kee

Before descending to the lower meadow, I gave a good watering to the 5 gate trees, plus the remaining (Pignut) Hickory in the TS.

I sat in the Nook, reflecting on life, when a fritillary settled on my sleeve, as if to say, "There, there now." (But then I noticed it trying to poke its tongue through my shirt to get at the sweat.) Only a little later, one of Two-stripe's kits showed up, looking very nervous, and somewhat scrawny. What were her kits doing out in broad daylight? That's usually a sign of trouble in raccoons. I put out a bowl of water and some kibble. This kit ate voraciously, but stopped earlier than I thought it would, heading down the trail to the creek. Presently two more kits came out of the brush to the east, one giving its location call (a nervous-sounding whine). They also ate and ran off in the direction of the first kit. Were they looking for their mother? Where was Two-stripe, anyway? To this point in the season there have been no signs of other litters.

I carried out the bee protocol (see below), noting more flies and wasps on this occasion and stopping to photograph a new species of Lady Beetle. I also found a dead dagger moth clinging to a Monarda stem (S). As I followed the protocol trail from flag to flag, a sense of foreboding crept over me. Then it struck: I hadn't seen a single grasshopper. Nor had I heard any day-singing crickets. By this time of the season, they are becoming plentiful, but I didn't see a grasshopper until half way back to the trailer. Where are they all?

On the road up to the UM, I spotted a Milbert's Tortoiseshell butterfly, another new species. This specimen refused to wait for the camera but, luckily, it's quite distinctive. It's rather surprising that we (along with numerous expert observers) had never observed this (common) butterfly on the property until now! Statistically, such an outcome is about as improbable as finding a rather rare species early on, the complementary event. (this happened in 2004)

I walked to the river and up to the bench on the bluffs to practice Pat's Art of the Still Observer. I was rewarded, about ten minutes later, by the appearance of a huge Bald Eagle, flying majestically downstream not much higher than eye-level! (I was so spellbound I completely forgot my camera.) Taking that as my climax, I returned to camp for a final spell in the Nook in case the kits came back. I noted what may be the last Ebony Jewelwing we'll see this year, hawking insects from a nearby bush. Apart from a Chipmunk and a Cottontail, I saw no more mammals. When I got home, I quickly realized that the dead moth was a common species already on our list -- the Fillet Dart (a Noctuid)

phenology: Spreading Dogbane dieback begun; Shagbark Hickory nutfall begun, last Ebony Jewelwing?

birds: (9) not many out, owing to the heat, one supposes

American Crow (EW); American Robin (GF); Bald Eagle (TR); Black-capped Chickadee (LM); Blue Jay (GF); Common Grackle (GF); Mourning Dove (GF); Northern Cardinal (FCF); Red-bellied Woodpecker (Tr)

new species:

'Four-spotted¹ Ladybeetle' *Hippodamia glacialis* LM KD Au15/09
Milbert's Tortoiseshell *Nymphalis milberti* ER/Cps KD Au15/09
[N.B. italics are lost in embedded text]

Note:

1. this LB actually has six spots if you count the two tiny ones on the shoulders of the elytra, but some individuals may lack these spots.

bee protocol: (sun/haze, 34° C, calm)

group code (to be used later) count

honey bees HB 2
bumblebees BB 1
other bees OB 1
small wasps SW 1
large wasp;s LW 3
small flies SF 2
large flies LF 3

IMAGES:

(click on image to enlarge)



*A new Lady Beetle and species # 1501!
One "spot" is an elongated blob.*

(click on image to enlarge)



Milbert's Tortoiseshell (file image)

(click on image to enlarge)



the river, looking upstream from the bluffs